

The REFORMED JOURNAL

VOLUME III — No. 6

A Periodical of Reformed Comment and Opinion

JUNE, 1953

A Digest of the Agenda

THIS is an attempt to digest the 1953 *Agenda*.

It's good—well, most of it. But there's so much of it, and such a big, heaping stack, all at once. There are no less than 270 pages of reports and overtures. And so, if some of what follows seems bolted or rough-chewed, remember the problem.

It'll be even worse for the poor Synodical delegate. Because at Synod there will be all of these 270 pages, *plus* Supplementary reports and Recommendations, *plus* Belated Overtures, *plus* I suppose, the rash of "petitions" that have become common and have unhappily been officially encouraged in recent years, *plus* the speeches of the Synodical visitors, *plus* — let's be careful! — the Synodical button-holers and lobbyists, from outside of the Church and from within.

This is a sign of the times — of our frenzied times!

Note well! The American Bible Society translates the Bible or parts of it in more than 1,000 languages, provides the Braille Bible in six languages for the blind, makes the Bible available to our chaplains in nine languages for the U.N. forces, has sent more than 700,000 Bibles to Korean soldiers and civilians and 50,000 for the Red Chinese prisoners, spreads the Bible into areas inaccessible or hostile to missionaries, and makes possible a world-wide distribution of the Bible in the languages of all nations, which, in the year 1951 amounted to 12,332,0000 Bibles. The Rev. Hessel Bouma, our representative in the American Bible Society, reports that "many calls come in for still more," and that "many of our men in the army and navy ask for complete Bibles instead of New Testaments."

S.F.T.C.

LIBRARY

And now it is asked whether we should not stop our support of this program, because the American Bible Society "will now begin to circulate the 1952 Bible on a wide scale." Apart from the fact that, as Rev. Bouma points out, the above statement is untrue, one cannot help asking about the warrant for this suggestion that we stop supporting the ABS.

Suppose it were true that the ABS meant to distribute the *RSV* "on a wide scale." Would that be ground for withdrawing support from the whole program for world-wide distribution of the King James and American Standard Versions, the Braille Bibles, and the millions of copies of foreign language and dialect translations which are absolutely crucial to world missionary endeavor?

And what — one may no doubt ask — what is so evil about the distribution of the *RSV*? One may take

Panic Over RSV?

Now for a digest of the *Agenda*. To stay within reasonable bounds, I propose to note and comment on only some of the reports and overtures.

There seems to be needless panic over the new *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible. Some are even suggesting that we ought to stop our support of the American Bible Society because it distributes parts of the new version (Cf. *Agenda* 1953, pp. 5, 6. Hereafter I will indicate *Agenda* only by page reference).

IN THIS ISSUE

A Digest of the Agenda	by George Stob	1
The "Absolute" Antithesis	by Leonard Verduin	10
Teachers Wanted	by Henry Zylstra	13
Lo, I Am With You Alway	by Henry Stob	15

A Digest of the Agenda — Continued

exception to the translation in parts — perhaps in many parts. But the *RSV*, too, is the Bible — the Word of God from heaven which the Lord gave for the redemption of His world. Who could object to the circulation of it?

No one, obviously, ought to take exception to a criticism of any translation. Linguistics is not an absolute science, and there are differences of judgment and ability among linguists. But there is something quite distressing about the current attack on the *RSV*. Consider the Fundamentalist minister in Ohio (of whose knowledge of Hebrew and Greek nothing is said) who ripped out the page bearing the translation of Isaiah 7:14 — “and a young woman shall conceive” — and burned it before the eyes of his congregation. One may hope he doesn’t get hold of a copy of the new Dutch translation, which Classis Alberta wants Synod to recommend for use in Holland worship, because the new Dutch Version translates Isaiah 7:14 the same as did the *RSV*! And consider the minister down South whose “zeal” for “orthodoxy” exceeded even that of his Ohio colleague. He took a blow torch to the pulpit and burned the whole *RSV* Bible. I wonder if those brethren stopped to reflect upon the fact that they were committing to the consuming flames THE BIBLE — God’s Word, in the only form in which God has made it available to us, i.e., in the form of the redactions and translations of scholarly but fallible men?

I pray God may deliver us from the blow-torch mentality in our own reactions to the *RSV*. Unhappily, we are on the edge of it. Read what has been written. And now there are three overtures relating to the *RSV*. Classis Hamilton asks for official Synodical “disapproval” of the *RSV*. Classis Muskegon asks for “some pronouncements regarding the use” of the *RSV*. Classis Sioux Center asks for study and advice as to whether we should support or oppose distribution of the *RSV* (Cf. Overtures 12, 13, 30).

These overtures prompt a few simple questions:

Have our ministers learned so little of Greek and Hebrew, or are they so unable to make use of critical commentaries, that they are unable to guide and instruct the people immediately under their care? Do they need

a Synodical pronouncement approving or disapproving the *RSV*, and giving instructions concerning its use, so that they need only say: “Synod has thus said”? If Synod must make pronouncements about the *RSV*, must synod also make pronouncements about the Goodspeed, Moffatt, Phillips, and other translations? Have we come so far from our Reformation heritage that we must resort to the Roman Catholic Index in the matter of Bible translations?

* * *

PERHAPS we had better pause awhile and listen to the voice of our own Church when she was not living in such frantic days. Our Church has consistently recognized that we are dependent for our Bibles on the dedications and translations of companies of the best textual and linguistic scholars in Christendom, and that as scholarship and research advances new translations will and must be provided. She has also recognized that since even the most respectable scholars are sometimes under literary and theological bias, and since the science of textual research and of linguistics is not infallible, *any* translation will be imperfect. Therefore it is incumbent upon every minister to study the Bible in the original and with the help of critical commentaries, and to accept the reading which seems most true to the original (Cf. Prof. L. Berkhof, “A Series on Bible Translations,” in *The Banner*, October 12, 1934, p. 12).* The Church has therefore refused to adopt an *official version* (Cf. *Acta Synodi*, 1926, p. 46). She has ventured only to “recommend” the American Standard Version — 25 years after it was published — but was careful not to condemn what she regarded as the very inferior Authorized (King James) Version (*Ibid.*). She trusted that her ministers would use either version with discretion, and guide their people in respect of the merits or demerits of both. She recommended the American Standard Version for the sake of uniformity, because of its growing popularity, and because of

* This series of six articles, appearing in *The Banner* of Sept. 7, 1934 and following issues, ought to be reprinted in pamphlet form today. It would be a most excellent tonic for the health of the Church.

The REFORMED JOURNAL

VOLUME III

NO.

JUNE, 1953

A Periodical of Reformed Comment and Opinion

EDITORIAL BOARD

Rev. Harry R. Boer, Dr. James Daane,

Rev. George Stob, Dr. Henry Stob,

Dr. Henry Zylstra

Published each month by the
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Subscription price: \$2.00 per year

Entered as Second Class Matter at the Post office at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Address all subscriptions and communications to:

THE REFORMED JOURNAL
255 Jefferson Avenue, S. E.
Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

its generally acknowledged superiority (Cf. *Acta 1926, passim*).

In 1934 there developed a protest against the recommendation of the American Standard Version (Cf. *Acta 1934*, pp. 94ff). The details of this particular controversy may be passed over at this point. But in one of the grounds which that Synod adopted in its refusal to recommend the King James Version in preference to the American Standard Version, there is an official statement quite relevant to the overtures of the Classes Hamilton, Muskegon, and Sioux Center. This is “The question may be raised whether a Synod would ever be able to pass intelligent judgment on the merits and demerits of a Bible Version. It might, of course, appoint a committee of expert linguists and textual critics — it could find such — request them to determine by independent study which is the best Version of the original, ascertain which English Version contains the most faithful rendering of the original, and to report at a later date — Synod. But even then the Synod would simply have to accept their word for whatever Version they might recommend. *It would not itself be able to pass an intelligent judgment on the matter*” (*Acta 1934*, p. 102;

italics). It was for this reason that our Church took a conservative position, refused to adopt the American Standard Version as the *official version*, refused to "condemn the use of the other," and waited until 25 years after the publication of the *ASV* before merely "recommending" it.

Obviously, there is no urgency for taking an official position now on the newly published *RSV* — and to do so would be most presumptuous and unwise. We might well leave that to the Synod of 1978. Nobody is now recommending the *RSV* for standard and official use. Nor should the Church be any more willing to condemn the *RSV* than it was, in 1926, to condemn the King James. The *RSV* is here. Our ministers are trained in Greek and Hebrew and know how to use critical commentaries, are they not? Well, then, let them use the *RSV*, as they do the translations of Goodspeed, Moffatt, Phillips, *et alii* — with discretion — and let them instruct their people as opportunity affords. There is no need to put the *RSV* on the Index. Our people are better secured in the faith, and the *RSV* is after all too much the Word of God, to suppose that a few, or even many, variants from the *ASV* or KJ will lead them away from the purity of the faith.

Meanwhile, as we scrutinize and make our evaluations of the *RSV*, let us remember the good words of Professor Berkhof: "In assuming a critical attitude with respect to this translation (in this case the *ASV - GS*), we may not proceed on the assumption that it is wrong wherever it does not favor our doctrinal tenets. Our doctrines should be tested by the Bible, and not the Bible by our doctrines. If we would have the right to condemn certain renderings because they rob us of some supposed doctrinal support, Pelagians, Socinians, and Arminians would have the very same right, and our Bible translations would fall victims to doctrinal controversies" (*The Banner*, Oct. 12, 1934, p. 368; my italics).

* * *

THREE is no reason to favor, and every reason to unequivocally reject the overture of Classis Hamilton that Synod disapprove the *RSV*, and "make provision to make its own translation in cooperation with other denominations" (Agenda, p. 254). It

does seem just a little presumptuous to suppose that we could or should produce a Christian Reformed "Vulgate," or even take part in the production of an American Evangelical "Vulgate." And if we want to perform a tremendously salutary service for the cause of American Christianity, we will do everything in our power to discourage the American Evangelicals from proceeding with any plans for an American Evangelical Version of the Bible.

Any such attempt to produce a splinter Bible would be the sheerest folly, and a mammoth disservice to the Church and Cause of Jesus Christ, for these reasons:

(1) There is no need for it. If the Authorized Version and the American Revised Version — already entrenched by long and popular usage and acceptance — are as superior to the *RSV* as is represented, an Evangelical translation would be intended only as a "counter-Bible" to the *RSV*. To produce such a "counter-Bible" would be to join in what is like the raucous and disreputable counter-crusading of Carl McIntyre. Let us not imitate McIntyre in that. Let us pray for a respectable and proper witness for the faith.

(2) The production of an Evangelical translation would in its own way be the victim of as much (or more) bias as is now charged against the *RSV*, particularly so if the motive behind it is prejudice against National Council sponsorship of the *RSV* and a set purpose to produce an "orthodox" Bible to offset a "liberal" Bible. Consider, among other things, the strong bias of American Evangelicals toward dispensationalism and pre-millennialism. It is one thing to find it in Bible *interpretations*. Are we ready to encourage its possible appearance in the Bible *text*? How shall we answer to God if we make our own or ask others to make their doctrinal predilections the motive for a new translation of the Bible? Let us remember Professor Berkhof: "Our doctrines should be tested by the Bible, and not the Bible by our doctrines."

We ought to consider, too, the warning of the Synod of 1934 that "there is great danger that the Bible might become a sort of play ball tossed to and fro between opposing factions" (Acts 1934, p. 101). If splinter Bibles must be produced, let it up to the Scofields and Joseph Smiths. But let us have no part of them.

(3) The Bible should be redacted and translated by the very best scholarship available to us in our world. There will, of course, be some biases in any collection of scholars. That is not wholly bad; for their association together in a common serious effort will help to the counteracting and cancelling of many. In any event, to refuse the services of highly competent linguistic and textual scholars because they are "liberal" would be to sin against the Spirit of God and the gifts of His grace, and would be to do despite to the historically given Word of God. Let no one forget what Christendom owes to the linguistic and textual scholarship of the "first modernist" — Erasmus, to say nothing of what it owes to the scholars of the Renaissance.

(4) Perhaps the most important consideration is that we should never accept any translation of the Bible except what may be counted a universally recognized Bible of Christendom. If the Evangelicals should produce their own translation, they would be guilty of creating a fathomless and irrevocable breach in Protestant Christianity. There is already an impassible gulf between Catholicism and Protestantism. Must we now induce it in Protestantism, too? If we do, our calling to influence the liberals in our world will be well-nigh impossible of fulfillment. Thank God, we can enter into discussion and debate with them now by reference to the Bible or Bibles recognized by all. But if we insist on one Bible for liberal Protestantism and another for orthodox Protestantism, the separation will be fatal, and the most significant point of common reference will be lost. This would be the more tragic since both "liberal" and "orthodox" Bibles would be essentially the Word of God. Thus the Evangelicals would have to suffer the awful guilt of making the Bible an instrument of party strife and of having set the Word of God in conflict with the Word of God.

* * *

GOD help us to be calm and poised and sane. There is not the slightest peril to His Word "which liveth and abideth forever," and when such peril does appear, we may surely trust Him to safeguard His own Word. Meanwhile, we have the imperfect Authorized Version, and the imperfect American Standard Version; and God has

A Digest of the Agenda — Continued

saved us and our children and our fathers before us through them, and through them he has kept us in the faith, except where we have chosen to ignore or disobey His Word.

And now, after 51 additional years of progress in linguistic and textual scholarship, God has in His Providence given us the *RSV*. Whatever else may be said of it, we may surely say that now. Now we have an additional translation to serve with others to more fully and effectively set before us the Word of God. Don't believe for a moment that the Word of God is being hidden from us in this new translation. God has never failed to guard His Word in the redactions and translations produced by responsible scholars in Christendom. And God has given us some good things through the *RSV*. Even Classis Hamilton says that "there is much improvement and many favorable things that could be said about this new version." There are objectionable things in it, too. But I know of no stricture against the *RSV* (and I have read only critical reviews) that would seem to disallow saying about the *RSV* what was once said about the *ASV*: "Some feared that the new version would be quite revolutionary. But, blessed be God, such is not the case. No doctrine of the faith is in the slightest degree affected . . . The Bible remains, for all practical purposes, totally unaffected" (Quoted by Berkhof, *loc. cit.*).

For such faults as appear, we have the guidance of an educated ministry, our own knowledge of the whole Word of God, and still the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all the truth.

Principles and Pronouncements

WHEN a representative of the Gereformeerde Kerken was at our Synod a few years ago, I asked him what he thought of our Synods. He answered somewhat as follows: One thing that strikes me very forcibly is that you have too many Study Committees, and that you make too many declarations and adopt too many principles. He went on to say: I shall never forget what old Dominee Van Andel once

said at a Ministers' Conference when I was a young minister. He said: "Och, Heere, bewaar ons toch voor het uitspreken van allerlei Synodale beginselen." (Oh Lord, please deliver us from the pronouncement of all manner of Synodical principles).

After having read the report on "Creation and Evolution," (pp. 21, 22), and that on "Mission Principles" (pp. 73-93), I find myself repeating the prayer of Van Andel.

The Committee on "Creation and Evolution" recommends the adoption of three guiding principles before adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1949. Those three guiding principles of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod are wholly unnecessary, and contribute *absolutely nothing* to the enlightenment of a big subject.

Here are the principles: (1) *The historical character of the revelation in Genesis 1 and 2 must be maintained without compromise.* (Of course! But why a Synodical pronouncement to this effect? Have we heretofore given freedom to our Church to think otherwise, or to maintain it *with* compromise? Or, is there someone or some group in our Church now denying the historical character of Genesis 1 and 2?) (2) *The true, completely trustworthy description by God of his work of creation is given to us in humanly intelligible form, so that, although it does not constitute an adequate representation of the divine act, it is sufficient for us to acknowledge and glorify Him as our Creator.* (*Mirabile dictu.* Now the Synod decides that God's description of creation is "true, and completely trustworthy," that Genesis is "humanly intelligible," and that we can find enough in it "to glorify him as our Creator." My parents, my dominees, my Christian School teachers taught me this before the Reformed Ecumenical Synod was even conceived, and I never doubted it. Are there some Reformed people who don't believe it?) (3) . . . *The Church rejects all evolutionary teaching which rules out God entirely, or conceives of God as dependent upon the process of a so-called creative evolution, or allows for him to enter into the process only incidentally.* (Ah, so the Ecumenical Synod decides that God should not be ruled out of his creation "entirely" — maybe partially?

— and must not be reduced to a dependent status or an incidental intruder. The doctrine of the Sovereignty of God now confirmed and guaranteed [the Reformed Ecumenical Synod?])

If the Christian Reformed Church adopts these, it will mean absolutely nothing to the ministry and membership of our Church, for this is what we have always preached and believed, and we have no intention — Darwin modern science notwithstanding — preaching or believing otherwise. And we have so preached and believed, not because of any Synodical pronouncement, but because we subscribe to the Bible and to the Reformed Creeds.

The adoption of these "guiding principles" can accomplish nothing except only to disgrace us. A future historian reading such Synodical pronouncements might conclude one of two things. Either (1) That the Christian Reformed Church was in 1953 shot through with the most radical forms of apostasy, since it appeared necessary to make such a Synodical affirmation of such perfectly clear Scriptural and creedal teaching. Or, (2) That the Christian Reformed Church had left its Reformation heritage and was in the process of reverting to practice, at least, to the Roman Catholic dogma that the foundation of faith is to be found in the *ex cathedra* pronouncements of the Church for faith and life. (After a bit more reading, one would be most likely to fix on the last conclusion as the right one).

OUR own Committee on "Creation and Evolution" had some sense of this peril, and tried to avoid it by adding some "provisos." These guiding principles, it says, "are not to be on a par with the Forms of Unity. They are merely guiding principles and directives . . . The 'decisions' should not be taken seriously; but we should not consider the person a heretic who deviates from them in the slightest degree." I am positive that the Committee does not at all mean what it here says. I think the Committee means to say that by the adoption of these "guiding principles" we have not reached scientific finality in our thoughts on Creation and Evolution, and therefore while standing on the above clear basic Scriptural principles, and being guided by them, there is still need for research and there must be freedom for research into and a reckoning with uncontested scientific facts.

But, unfortunately, the statement of the Committee does not say this, but says something quite different, and, in fact, very bad. The *statement* means that there are some clear and basic Scriptural principles not to be put on a par with our Forms of Unity because they are of less weight than those set forth in our Confessions. The *statement* suggests that while our Confessions are authoritative, certain clear and basic truths of Scripture are only "guiding principles and directives." The *statement* virtually says that one may deviate "in the slightest degree" from "the historical character of the revelation in Genesis 1 and 2," from acknowledgement of "the true and completely trustworthy" character of Genesis, and from the truth of the Sovereignty of God in creation, without being a heretic. If taken seriously, this would open wide the door to theological license. The Committee obviously didn't intend what the *statement* says.

The statement of its second "proviso" is likewise defective. This statement says that the "historical character" of Genesis 1 and 2 needs further elucidation, because "there are many differences among theologians in regard to the connotation of these words and also about the historical meaning of the words of Genesis 1 and 2." It is not clear what kind of elucidation the Committee has in mind. But since that is not indicated, the Committee's *statement*, as it stands, opens the door wide to any number of interpretations of the "historical character" of Genesis 1 and 2, and reduces to nothing the "guiding principle" whose adoption it recommends.

Quite obviously, this report and its recommendations cannot be adopted. But I hope Synod will not leave it without taking note of the Committee's suspicion of a kind of Roman Catholic authoritarianism lurking in the principles adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1949, which the Committee was concerned to avoid. And after taking note of that, I hope Synod will decide to urgently ask the Reformed Ecumenical Synod to rethink its function and purpose, and suggest that it guard carefully against becoming a Super-Synod issuing *ex cathedra* pronouncements on perfectly clear and undeniable Scriptural principles, for adoption and *ex cathedra* pronouncement by its member churches.

Remember old Dominee Van Andel's "Och, Heere, bewaar ons toch voor het

uitspreken van allerlei Synodale begin-selen."

* * *

THE same prayer occurs to me when I read the Report of the Mission Principles Study Committee. There is here such a super-abundance of "het uitspreken van allerlei Synodale begin-selen" as to make Van Andel turn over in his grave. Here, for example, are some of the principles which Synod is presumably to belabor, and after study and debate to officially adopt:

— *The evangelistic task is performed by preaching and teaching, i.e., the direct oral and written transmission of the gospel.*

— *The missionary is not called to transmit his own culture to the mission field, but to proclaim the Gospel . . .*

— *The basic condition for baptism is faith in Christ as Savior and Lord. Where that is present and exemplified in life, baptism should not be unduly postponed in the interest of a high standard of doctrinal knowledge.*

— *Continued nurture in the faith after baptism is as much a duty of the Church as pre-baptismal instruction.*

— *The exercise of discipline is essential before, as well as after, the organization of a Church.*

— *Converts, as prophets, priests, and kings under Christ, must be stimulated to witness to the faith that is in them by word and deed.*

Now, it would seem to me that these perfectly self-evident truths are quite present to the intelligence of any responsible Christian, to say nothing of any responsible Christian leader. Perhaps, in facing our mission work, we need occasionally to have them put more clearly before our minds by the writing of missionary articles. Most of our sermons and articles are restatements of and instruction in self-evident Scriptural truths. But why these official Synodical pronouncements? Will these truths, already present to the Church's mind, be made more true or more binding when they are officially adopted and pronounced *ex cathedra*?

We need teaching that will refresh our minds with respect to these truths and indicate their relevance to and importance for missionary work. But we have missionary sermons, missionary articles, and missionary conferences to

serve that purpose. Some matters — such as Medical Missions and Education in Missions — need more thorough elucidation through discussion and debate. On that score I have enjoyed and profited from the discussion and debate between the Majority and Minority on the question of Education in Missions.

Like Editor Van Halsema of *De Wachter* I am much drawn to the Minority position on Education, and consider it the ideal, that is, *the right principle*. But unlike Editor Van Halsema, I do not believe that because the ideal cannot be always applied in real (that is, imperfect and sinful situations) we should scuttle it by *officially adopting* as governing for our missions work the principle that "it is proper for the Church in her work to use any means which is congenial to the gospel." This is a broad and infinitely elastic principle, as the Rev. Boer has pointed out in a recent article (Cf. *The Reformed Journal*, May 1953). It seems, indeed, to be a principle which virtually abandons all principles.

If Synod is to *officially adopt* either of these two principles, it is certain that it ought to adopt the basically right principle of the Minority and reject the basically wrong principle of the Majority. I believe, however, that Synod should not officially adopt either the principles of the Majority or the Minority, and that for two reasons: (1) The Church ought to make decisions about mission policy and procedure not in abstraction, but by an intelligent and Scripture and Spirit-led judgment applied to the concrete cases by which she is confronted. In consideration of such judgment, it seems undeniable that there is need for a radical alteration of policy and practice with reference to education on the Indian field. But the abstract principle of the Majority would give blanket approval to it. On the other hand, it is conceivable that in another area the Church might count it advisable to engage in educational work for a time and to some extent. But the abstract principle of the Minority could be used to prevent it. (2) In the problematics of mission procedure, no Synod should ever foist upon the Church an *official principle* relating to procedure — to which, then, every teacher and missionary must subscribe. It is proper — when differences of judgment appear — to require conformity to an adopted *policy*. But it is highly improper to require conformity in thinking or teach-

A Digest of the Agenda — Continued

ing to an officially adopted principle. Let us avoid the adoption of abstract principles to govern mission policy. Rather, let the Church be increasingly educated in her own mind, so that the right principles are disclosed and come to govern her normatively, as her own convictions. What we need is not the imposition of a principle on an honestly dissenting minority — no matter how clear and convinced some of us may be about it. But we do need — and badly — education, enlightenment, discussion, debate (such as between this Majority and Minority), so that the Church may come to a more common and convinced mind, and so that the Church, out of her informed and sanctified intelligence, can make the best decisions in the *concrete situations* by which she is faced.

The Report of the Mission Principles Study Committee is a wonderful thing — a wonderful thing to "receive for information," and to "commend to the churches for careful study." And let the men who worked on it, and others, too, write articles in our various journals so that there may be formed in the mind of our Church and her leaders a sound and solid missionary intelligence out of which the Church may work in the prosecution of her missionary program. And let us, out of the best judgment we have, make our decisions in concrete cases.

For the rest, like old Dominee Van Andel — "Och, Heere, bewaar ons toch . . ."

Two Professors for Practical?

THE Board recommends "that Synod appoint two men for the Department of Practical Theology, one to begin immediately in September 1953 for Church Government and related subjects, and the other to begin in September 1954 after a year's study, to teach Homiletics and related subjects" (p. 54).

The Educational Committee of the Board set the same proposal before the Faculty for its judgment in January 1951. What it proposed was to be a means toward strengthening and enlarging our Seminary faculty so that the Th.D. Degree might "be inaugurated as soon as possible." At that time Dr.

Clarence Bouma and Professor George Stob expressed themselves as not favoring *two men* for Practical Theology, for reasons which will appear later in this article.

It will be interesting and enlightening to know why it is thought *two men* are needed for Practical Theology. The Board says only that "with our increased enrollment there is far too much work for one man in this strategic field." In the report of Acting President R. B. Kuiper, the following reasons are given: (1) "The present arrangements for *Practice Preaching* are quite inadequate for a hundred students." (2) "The course in *Church Government* should be expanded from three hours to at least four." (3) "The department of Practical Theology should offer a course in what may be called *Pastoral Psychiatry*."

It is unfortunate that an analysis of the work of Practical Theology, and a specific indication as to how the work would be divided between two men, did not appear in the *Agenda*. It is impossible to make an intelligent appraisal of the proposal without that. So we shall have to make such analysis as we can by consulting the Seminary Catalogue.

There are six courses offered in Practical Theology: (1) *Homiletics* (the science of sermon-making and preaching) — 2 hours. (2) *Public Worship* — 2 hours. (3) *Church Government* — 3 hours. (4) *Catechetics* — 2 hours. (5) *Pastoral Work* — 2 hours. (6) *Practice Preaching* — 6 hours. (The hours indicated are "teaching hours").

It should be noted that though *Practice Preaching* is but a two hour per year course for the student (one hour each semester), it is a course of six (6) teaching hours per year for the Professor (3 hours each semester). The Professor of Practical Theology, therefore, carries a total teaching load of 17 teaching hours for the whole year, or 8½ hours a week per semester. Suppose we add, as Acting President Kuiper suggests, one hour to *Church Government*, and one hour for *Pastoral Psychiatry* (as in Princeton Seminary). In that case the very maximum load for Practical Theology would be 19 hours for the whole year, or 9½ teaching hours a week per semester.

Does that require the services of *two full-time, full-salaried men* in the

Department of Practical Theology? Of course, if we had money to burn and adequate available professorial material, one might reckon it desirable --- but in that case we should no doubt move to strengthen other departments first. But we have no superfluity either of funds or professors. And so we shall have to think in terms of necessity, and while doing so we should make comparisons with other departments.

The Professor in Old Testament carries a teaching load of 17 hours per year — only two less than the very maximum considered for Practical Theology. In 1951-52 the Professor of Dogmatics carried a teaching load of 19 hours — the same as the very maximum considered for Practical Theology. The Professor of New Testament carried a teaching load of 15 hours. In past year, the Professor of Church History 12, and the Professor of Apologetics normally carries a load of 13 hours per year. The normal load of the Professor of Missions would be 7 hours per year, but that Department needs to be established from the bottom, and new courses have to be worked up and added. (We are not taking into account here the hours taught in graduate work).

It should be noted in this connection that the work in all the other departments in the nature of the case requires more study and research than does the work of Practical Theology, and there is considerably more demand for graduate and elective work in the other departments than there is in the Department of Practical Theology, as will appear immediately from a survey of the record. In consideration of that the Department of Practical Theology has no extraordinary load when compared with the other Departments, and when compared with some a *lesser* load. The full Professors in College (who for the most part do not take on the work income of preaching) carry a teaching load of from 24 to 30 hours per year together with a much greater student load than any of the Seminary Professors.

But even so, it is quite possible to reduce the teaching load for the Professor of Practical Theology from the maximum considered. It is a question whether another hour should be added to *Church Government*, particularly in view of the fact that basic matters of Church government are already dealt with in Dogmatics. And it ought to be remembered that as recently as the

school year 1951-52 some entire courses were eliminated, and hours were taken away from others, because there was a too heavy schedule of hours for the students. If hours can now be added to the student load, they should first be added to the courses before reduced. (It is almost impossible to teach *Ancient Church History* in only 2 hours, and *Modern Church History* badly needs an additional hour). So *Church Government* had obviously better stay at 3 hours. As for *Pastoral Psychiatry*, that course should in any event not be taught except by a man trained and experienced in psychiatry. Princeton Seminary is served once a week for a semester by Dr. J. Sutherland Bonnell from New York City. We, too, would have to obtain the services of a psychiatric expert from the outside for a serious course. If we leave out these two hours, then, the very maximum load for Practical Theology would be only 17 hours for the whole year, or 8½ hours a week per semester.

But included in those 17 hours are 6 hours for *Practice Preaching*. And in a student body numbering 100, those are not ordinary hours. Of course, the load is in part moderated by reason of the fact that the same text for sermon-making and delivery is customarily assigned to more than one student. Even so, the pressure of *Practice Preaching* in a large student body is great enough to warrant providing some relief in that particular branch for the Professor of Practical Theology.

But surely, there is no need to engage a full-time, full-salaried man for relief duty. The purpose could be served by obtaining part-time service from a neighboring minister (as we did in 1951-52), or by assigning some of that work to the Professor Extraordinary (whose duties will be quite limited if a man is obtained for the New Testament Department), or by assigning some to other Professors who may be thought to have a lighter load. After all, our funds are limited, legitimate professorial material is not abundant, and we need to husband our material and human resources as well as we can for the strengthening and expansion of more strategic areas in the Seminary program.

In this connection it ought to be observed that the Practical Department is the least significant of all departments in the Seminary for basic theological learning. And the Practical Department can add little appreciable strength

to a respectable graduate study program. It is by all odds the least frequented department in graduate schools of theology -- except in some instances where the typically American pragmatic spirit is rampant. It is noteworthy that the Free University has heretofore not even had a separate department for Practical Theology — the various subjects having been spread among the men in the other departments — though it seems now to contemplate such a department in conjunction with the Missions Department. This would seem to suggest that we ought in our Seminary to contemplate some tie-up between the Practical Department and the Missions Department. It is feasible — the load in the Missions Department not being particularly heavy — so far a total of 7 hours, or 3½ hours per semester. And it is reasonable, since both deal in very large or predominant measure with the preaching, pastoral, and governmental work of the Church.

Admittedly our Seminary needs strengthening theologically and educationally, particularly if we hope to offer higher graduate study and if we hope to serve and influence American theology and the American ministry. But it is hardly wise to begin strengthening at the least important end. If the Church has money and men available she must consider that there is urgent need for the strengthening of the Biblical and Dogmatics Departments. These are most basic to all theological study — undergraduate and graduate — and most needful for helping us to meet and serve in the face of the crucial theological and Biblical problems by which we and our world are confronted. We should add to these departments, and if necessary obtain funds and procure men of stature and scholarship from elsewhere. Attend to the first things first, and earnestly. But let us not waste our limited resources by giving first and superfluous attention to the least important area of theological learning.

Synodical "Labor Policy"

WHAT kind of labor policy should Synod adopt in the awarding of contracts for the construction of denominational buildings? Should Synod, in awarding contracts, "apply the economic principle of competitive bid-

ing and the demand for good workmanship," and therefore award the contract to the contractor who will guarantee satisfactory workmanship at the lowest cost? Or, should Synod, making the matter of cost and quality workmanship secondary, award the contract to an Open Shop contractor whose bid is not exorbitant and whose workmanship may be counted passable?

This, in short, is the question to which the Labor Policy Committee addresses itself (pp. 173-182). The Majority of this Committee (Rev. P. Holwerda, Prof. H. J. Ryskamp, Rev. W. Van Rees, and Mr. Joseph Gritter, Secretary of the CLA) declare that the latter should be Synod's policy — contracts to be awarded on an Open Shop basis, and not on the principle of competitive bidding.

The Minority (Mr. C. Van Valkenburg) declares that Synod should not choose for any labor policy, should refrain from stipulating in contracts a right or wrong method of economic organization, and refrain from setting up conditions in contracts based on distinctions in labor union affiliation.

The Majority seems to me to be wholly wrong, the Minority wholly right.

The position of the Majority is the following: In awarding building contracts, Church Boards "shall exert themselves to the utmost to safeguard the rights of those whose conscientious convictions prevent them from affiliating with so-called Neutral Unions." These "rights" shall be safeguarded by stipulating in the contract that no contractor, sub-contractor, or individual shall be prevented or excluded from working on the proposed building because of his affiliation or non-affiliation with any labor organization. That is to say, Synod shall safeguard the "rights" of the Christian worker and support his conscience by insisting that the contractor must have or adopt an Open Shop Labor Policy in order to get the building job (pp. 176f., points 4 x a, b).

This position, it appears, is wholly wrong.

1. It is wrong, for one thing, because it is based on a number of erroneous assumptions.

(a) It is based on the erroneous assumption that because the Church has recommended the organization of Christian Labor Associations, she has cultivated a Christian Labor Association conscience, and that therefore the Church must support the conscience of

A Digest of the Agenda — Continued

CLA members in preference to and against the conscience of the Christian member of a "neutral" union. This is not true, and it is not Scriptural. The Church has cultivated only a *Christian* conscience and honors the conscientious convictions of both CLA and "neutral" union members. She is bound to support both, and neither to favor one above the other nor to take position for one against the other. This is what Scripture demands in instances where it is impossible to make a categorical declaration of right or wrong: "To his own lord he standeth or falleth . . . Let each man be fully assured in his own mind . . . So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:4, 5, 12).

(b) The Majority position is based on the erroneous assumption that the Church must, in awarding building contracts, support the Christian conscience by assuring to those who are members of a Christian Labor Association a job on denominational building projects. This is not so. The Church supports the Christian conscience by encouraging the Christian to willingly and cheerfully suffer the consequences of his own conscientious choice. But the Church does not and may not support the Christian conscience by assuring the Christian that she will do all in her power to secure him from suffering those consequences and guarantee him a job where she has control. This would be an exercise of economic favoritism, and for the Church it would be the sin of "worldliness."

(c) The Majority position is based on the erroneous assumption that the Church must guarantee natural and material "rights" in a sphere outside of her own. This is not so. To the contrary, the Church may not reach into the natural order, carry on manipulations in the world of labor, and, when she is in a position of control, exert pressure by conditions which she imposes on economic society to guarantee a job to one and deny a job to another. It is not the Church's prerogative to misuse the power that she has as a customer to dispense or withhold jobs. This is the prerogative, the God-given prerogative, of the employer. "Teacher," said a fellow to Jesus once, "bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over

you?" (Luke 12:13, 14). Jesus refused to guarantee natural and material rights. May His Church do what the Church's Lord refused to do because He had no such appointment and no such right? The Church's Lord was sent to minister to the spiritual center of man's life, and therefore said immediately after: "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness." So, too, the spiritual center of man's life is the only proper charge of the Church of Christ.

(d) The Majority position is based on the erroneous assumption that when Synod engages a contracting firm which operates with a Union or Closed Shop policy — which policy is considered wrong by a segment of our Church membership — that organization imposes "its will upon our people" (Cf. "Ground" under 4, b, (1), p. 177). That is not so. The contractor would be imposing his will upon our people if he violated the express conditions of a contract, and did something contrary to the agreements the Church had made with him. Otherwise not. When the Church engages a Closed Shop contractor, she does it of her free will — not because the contractor forces acceptance of the contract. That contractor doesn't impose his will upon our people when the Church honorably enters into contract with him. If the Majority wants to be logical it should say rather that the Church — which "has the authority and the power" — imposes her will upon some of our people. But that would be wrong, too, because based on a still more erroneous assumption.

2. The Majority position is wrong, in the second place, because the adoption of a policy designed to safeguard the "rights" of some church-members will at the same time be a declaration of principle which the Church has heretofore refused to make. That is to say, if Synod should so take position against the Union or Closed Shop as to refuse to do business with a Union or Closed Shop contractor, she would be declaring: "The Union and Closed Shop are wrong. The Church may not do business with Union or Closed Shop contractors. Therefore our Church members may not be associated with the Union or Closed Shop. Therefore our Church members may not be members of unions that obtain a Union or Closed Shop agreement. Therefore, Church

members who are contractors, may not enter into Union or Closed Shop agreements (i.e., assuming that what is wrong for the Christian laborer is also wrong for the Christian employer)."

The Church has heretofore refused to make such judgments. If the Church is now to make pronouncement on the Union or Closed Shop, let her do so forthrightly, and not by indirection, and let the judgment be based on a conclusive study and inquiry and on well-founded reasons. The Church may not permit such an important declaration of principle to slip in with the baggage of a "Synodical Labor Policy."

3. Thirdly, the position of the Majority is wrong because it is virtually a promotion of the interests of the CLA and its membership by the leverage of an ecclesiastical decision. The battle between the CLA and the "neutral" unions is the CLA's battle, but not the Church's. And that battle must be fought out in the economic world, and no part of it be fought out in the councils of the Church. Otherwise the Church will compromise her own character and calling — by meddling in matters that are not her affair. And the cause of the CLA will also suffer injury, for an economic organization that obtains advantage in the labor field by preferential ecclesiastical legislation will suffer serious loss of good will. The CLA cause is best served in the only way it can rightly be served — by legitimate efforts on the part of the CLA in its own proper sphere.

4. Fourthly, the position of the Majority is highly inadvisable, as well as wrong, because it conflicts with the newly formed policy of the CLA, if therefore inimical to CLA interests, and will set the CLA against itself. The CLA recently decided to adopt a program calling for the formation of Christian workers groups within neutral labor organizations for the purpose of studying Christian social thought and influencing CIO and AFL action. This is highly gratifying. It is also highly significant, because it means that the CLA now recognizes that the "neutral" unions are not absolutely reprobate, and that the Christian may be a member of such unions and exercise his influence in them.

Now, Synod will surely not want to adopt a labor policy prejudicial to the unions in which not only Christians but even CLA members have membership. Synod will not, in the questionable en-

leavor to safeguard the "rights" of CLA members *outside* of the "neutral" unions, adopt a policy to the hurt of CLA members *in* the "neutral" unions.

* * *

In any event, as the Minority recommends, let the Church not fall into the "error of the totalitarian action" of interfering in the details of economic life. Let the Church stay in the Church and remain the Church. Let us obey our own Church Order (Art. 30) which requires that in our ecclesiastical assemblies "ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner." And let the Church trust her appointed Boards to conclude building contracts that have regard to the established laws of economic life, with discretion and conscience subject to the law of God. Let the Church address herself to ecclesiastical and spiritual and moral policy, and resist the temptation to forget her position and calling by adopting a Synodical "Labor Policy."

Miscellany

THREE are many other things on the Synodical menu that are of quite some interest and importance. But I cannot digest all, or even most of them. Let me finish by choosing only a few.

There is a proposed *Form For Erasure of Members By Baptism* (pp. 17 ff.). It seems to erase the distinction between Erasure and Excommunication. For this, I would refer you to the very pertinent discussion of Rev. Martin Monsma in *De Wachter* of April 7, April 21, and May 5 — which every synodical delegate ought to read before voting on this matter.

The Chaplain Committee says it is going to try to get Seminarians into the Chaplaincy because the need is great (p. 32). It would be unfortunate if we should have to recruit our Seminarians for that. Seminary graduates need to get ministerial study habits fixed (the chaplaincy is a bad place for that). And it were much better if they had opportunity first to learn more about people and about life through pastoral experience in a Church. The major part of the Chaplain's work is the hardest pastoral job in the world. Of course, if no others are available, and Seminarians are willing in consid-

eration of great need, we must let them go. One might wish, however, that reasonably seasoned young ministers were recruited for the chaplaincy, and would go — so that the Seminary graduates would not have to make so much of a sacrifice because of the unwillingness of others. Our younger, reasonably seasoned ministers may be assured that a few years in the chaplaincy would do them worlds of good. It's mighty helpful sometimes to get away from some of the mental and other ruts of the professionalized ministry.

The Education Committee brings out a big report on Catechetical training. Notwithstanding what Synods may have asked for and what questionnaires may have disclosed, that neatly graded and nicely defined curriculum, no matter how elegantly efficient on paper, is not quite realistic. It is rather too ambitious, I fear, to add courses in Church History, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort to the regular catechism curriculum. People — young and old — being what they are and our day being what it is, it is a quite large enough job to teach Bible history freshly and meaningfully and to indoctrinate in the classic truths of the Catechism. The Compendium, I judge, ought to be the basic text-book, and taught over and again from the ages of 12 or 13 to 17 or 18 or beyond. A good teacher will be able well enough to make adaptations in teaching to the various age groups and add some Church History, Belgic Confessions, and Canons of Dort in the process — but it will take that long to really learn the Compendium and make it stick. And perhaps we ought to consider that the teacher (the minister) is crucial in catechism, and even a \$5,000 plus text-book program is no panacea.

I wonder about that thing on page 233 of the *Agenda*: "When the catechumen makes profession of faith before the entire curriculum has been studied, *the consistory should require that the curriculum be completed.*" (My italics). That, I am afraid, is a new species of authoritarianism, which moves more in the direction of upholding the new curriculum than in that of considering the problem of serving the needs of our young people. We may require the Church's basic book of doctrine — the Compendium. Beyond that we may offer "elective" courses, but hardly "required" courses. In any event, leave some room for growth in

sanctified intelligence by sanctified voluntary endeavor. A confessing member is also a priest, prophet, and king, you know.

The NAE matter arises again. (pp. 256, 257). Classis Ostfriesland proposes something fantastic, however, when it asks that *the Synod of 1953 override the ruling of the President of Synod 1952* which the Synod of 1952 sustained (Cf. Overture 20). The President is beyond reach, tending "sheep" in Dorr. As for Overture 21, Classis Ostfriesland is mistaken in suggesting that the report of the Study on Ecumenical Principles was tabled. Not so. It was received for information. It had been before the Church for a whole year. With intelligence of the principles to which that Report gave expression, the Synod of 1951 decided as it did to withdraw from the NAE. As for grounds for our withdrawal from the NAE — a letter was drafted and approved at Synod, respectfully sent to the NAE in explanation of our withdrawal. That letter was printed in *De Wachter* shortly after Synod adjourned, though unfortunately not in the Acts of Synod, nor in *The Banner*. And if "the action . . . has given rise to misunderstanding and unrest in the Church," perhaps Synod will provide an explanation in our official Church paper — *The Banner*, to offset the unbecoming attack on our withdrawal from the NAE which appeared in our official Church paper — *The Banner*, very shortly after Synod 1951 adjourned.

Then there is Ostfriesland's overture for *Separation of Calvin College from Church Control* (pp. 257, 258). This is consistent with principle we have always solemnly professed. And I suspect there would be nothing better for both Church and College. But it will never be achieved by overture or Synodical resolution. If Calvin College is to become a parental or association school, Christian believers had better come forward, ask for it, and form an association to care for it and govern it. If they do not, Calvin College will remain a Church School — hampered by the Church, and an undue burden to the Church — until the end.

But now this is enough.

I hope Synod can digest the Agenda better than I did.

—GEORGE STOB

The "Absolute" Antithesis

By LEONARD VERDUIN

IN Reformed circles men speak of an antithesis between the Kingdom of Christ and that of Satan, between the children of God and men of the world, between the regenerate and men in the raw. And, this antithesis is sometimes said to be "absolute."

Just how to think the relation of the society of the redeemed to the society of men as such, is, as John Baillie has said recently, one of the weightiest problems confronting the Church; therefore we do well to think this matter of the antithesis carefully. At no point is it more necessary to lead our thoughts captive to the Word of God than at this point.

The history of Christ's Church is littered with the wreckage caused by an extremism, an absolutism touching the antithesis. It is born of a "relentless logic" rather than of an agonizing attempt to be faithful to the Word of God. To tone down the antithesis so that presently all the Faith's great opposites pale into a common grey is to do the cause of Christ great harm; but one can also paint in such contrasty colors as to fall into equally serious fault.

We seek to serve a good cause as we set down in this article some of the axioms that have hitherto been a part of the Reformed tradition and faith anent the matter of the antithesis.

* * *

FIRST of all, it should be stated that *ideologically considered* the antithesis is necessarily absolute. By definition regeneracy is the exact opposite of unregeneracy. Life and death differ absolutely not gradually. Christ and Belial are opponents not partners. That which is of the flesh is flesh and that which is of the spirit is spirit, and never the twain shall meet. One must either stumble at the Cross or glory in it; there is no mediating position. The event of regeneration reverses, if one may put it so, the mechanism of the soul; and it, as truly as it may be said of a machine, cannot turn clockwise and counter-clockwise simultaneously.

It is indeed the glory of the Reformed faith that it has insisted upon an antithesis, and, upon an antithesis that is absolute — when considered ideologically. And in so doing it has simply

put in plain language that notion which, as John Dewey rightly saw, is part and parcel of historic Christianity, namely, the notion of "sheep" and "goats," the "saved" and the "lost," the "elect" and the "reprobate," or whatever pair of contrasting terms may suit the context. To cease from using these terms as opposites is not only to cease from speaking in the Reformed idiom — it is to scuttle historic and Biblical Christianity.

So far so good.

BUT now come footnotes, modifying footnotes, in which complementary truths are set forth, truths that must be held in conjunction with the truths enunciated in the text. And it is the need for such footnotes that marks the mind of the truly Reformed thinker. When he is discoursing on the sovereignty of God, for instance, he will feel the need of a footnote in which the complementary truth of the responsibility of man and the actualness of option are recognized.

It so happens that it is part of the Reformed heritage to feel the need of a modifying footnote when we speak of the antithesis. This will account for the fact that the expression "absolute" antithesis is quite rare in our tradition.

A second but equally well enunciated axiom of the Reformed faith is that the antithesis as it manifests itself empirically in this dispensation is never absolute. All men, the regenerate as well as the unregenerate, present the phenomenon of *natura mixta*. This may be resented, as it surely will, by a "relentless logic," but it is a fact with which traditional Reformed thought was well acquainted. There is something of the "old" man in everybody, regenerate and unregenerate alike. In the regenerate there are traces of the earlier modality of unregeneracy; and, in the unregenerate there are similarly traces of the earlier mode of rectitude. It is this situation that makes it necessary for Reformed people to be extremely cautious with the expression "absolute" antithesis.

"Absolute" Unregeneracy?

TO make unmistakably clear what we mean let us assume that it is possible to study human souls in the

same fashion as biologists study men-bodies; let us imagine that it is possible to take a specimen of soul tissue, put a thin slice of it between glass slides and look at it under extreme magnification.

Let us make a careful study of unregeneracy as we meet up with it. We shall manage to catch a specimen in which there is a heavy concentration of evil; one of the wicked medieval popes would serve admirably, or, Judas Iscariot, or some such. And what does the microscope reveal? Unregeneracy by and large, sin, depravity, fallenness. The concentration of evil is so heavy that we do not notice at first an area of tissue, at the lower left, that does not conform to the characteristic pattern of fallenness. Somewhat disappointed with this lack of absoluteness we go out into the fields looking for a better specimen, that is, a worse individual. But the outcome is not essentially different; that same non-typical area keeps showing up at the lower left. Convinced that we have looked at enough specimens so that conclusions are in order we write that "as far as our examinations go 'absolute' unregeneracy does not occur."

We might have known it beforehand. A careful study of the Word of God would have made the laboratory work hardly necessary; or, a serious contemplation of the Reformed creed. The Belgic Confession, for instance, has come to the same conclusions long before bioscopic slides were in use. The author had also realized that "absolute" unregeneracy, that is, unregeneracy without a footnote, is not what we see when we look at fallen man in a close-up. In its 14th Article, as it speaks of the Fall and its consequences for man it says of man that he "has transgressed the commandment of life which he has received and he has by his sin distanced himself from God his true life, having corrupted his entire nature; body and soul were made worthy of punishment by death both spiritual and physical. He is become wicked, perverse, blind in his understanding, corrupt in all ways. And he has lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God; so that nothing is left to him by way of remnant but small traces of the gifts which are sufficient to render

man without excuse, but insufficient to make us find God) seeing that everything is changed to darkness in us, as the Scriptures say . . ." (We have translated from the French of the original version of 1561. And we have supplied the brackets, to make the syntax of the lengthy sentence clear in translation).

In this article the Confession states admirably the Reformed doctrine of fallenness; but as it does so it feels the need of a footnote in which something by way of modification is presented. It is highly instructive that the Confession speaks of the "traces" precisely here (rather than in some other context), in the statement concerning man's fallenness. Could anyone want better evidence that the first generation of Reformed Fathers did of set purpose shy away from the "relentless logic" of absolutism?

Advocates of the "absolute" antithesis commonly try to cushion their absolutism somewhat with a reference to "common grace," something that is said to be operative in a world of fallenness without the footnote; but it should be observed that this is not what the Confession says — for it calls the "traces" *vestigial!* The Confession says that what we had spotted at the lower left corner is a heritage of the prelapsarian past. It speaks of it as something that has somehow survived the Fall.

Just how large or how small the area of nonconformity in the unregenerate heart is is not the question just now — although it is in itself a very important question; no doubt its size differs among individuals, perhaps also between eras — probably it too has something to do with history and historical process. But it is pertinent to note that the Confession says that the area of nonconformity is "small." We think it is better because of its smallness to refer to it in a footnote or some such device. At the same time it ought to be observed that it is sizeable enough to precipitate the question among the folk for which the Confession was written as to whether it is "sufficient to make us find God," a consideration which the Confession then answers in an unmistakable negative.

In the light of the Creed it is incumbent upon all who feel themselves bound by it to speak circumspectly when they talk of an "absolute" antithesis. To speak as if the nonconform-

ing area at the lower left is not there is to speak across the Confession. To talk of fallen man as though he were demonic is to ignore the footnote which the Reformed standard feels it needs as it delineates the Fall and its consequence.

For our present purpose we may perhaps assume that the Creed is also Biblical, and that our readers will consider it so. But in the interest of good theological habit we may perhaps ask a little space for a single glance at the Book to which also the Creed is subject. We read, in 1 Timothy 3:7, that a prospective elder in the Church "must have good testimony from them that are without." Here we must understand that "those outside" not only have a pretty well developed sense of right and wrong but that the Holy Spirit himself has such confidence in the rightness of their moral judgments that unless a man is well spoken of by them he must not be put on the nomination for elder! Surely such an assessment of the world's sense of right and wrong collides with any theology that does not feel the need of a footnote as it discusses the depravity of man.

Nor is the Belgic Confession alone in its careful, non-absolutist, usage. The Heidelberg Catechism proceeds with the same caution. It asserts, in its answer to Q. 5, that men are "prone by nature to hate God and their neighbor" (The original Latin has *propensum*); this is not the same as to say that men actually do so hate. I must confess that I am *prone* to sleep away half the forenoon; but anyone who would gather from this confession of mine that I do actually so waste my time draws unwarranted conclusions for I do actually get up before breakfast, always. All sorts of agencies keep me, in this instance, from doing what I am "prone" to do.

"Absolute" Regeneracy?

HAPPILY we have left our laboratory equipment intact; for we must use it further in a very similar study. We wish to take an equally careful look at regeneracy.

This time on our field trip we are after a saint. We want the heaviest concentration of regeneracy available; if it can be procured we want an exemplar of "absolute" regeneracy; a David, or a Saint Francis of Assisi would be gratefully received.

But when we put the transparency under the microscope what do we see? A heavy concentration of regeneracy, to be sure. It is a joy to look upon. How different is this tissue from what was typical of the specimens we examined earlier.

But our previous investigation has made us cautious. So we scrutinize the corners of the field. And what do we see, here at the upper right? It looks distressingly much like the tissue we have learned to know only too well. A careful check and recheck leaves no room for question; if it isn't unregeneracy I declare it is carnality, which is a different name for the same thing. And so, not without pronounced pain, we write that "as far as our examinations go absolute regeneracy does not occur."

Again, we might have known. Not the Bible, nor our Reformed Confessions, but a "relentless logic" has precipitated our surprise at what we saw under magnification.

The Belgic Confession is still lying open before us. Without turning a single page we find the footnote all formulated, the "but" which we feel we need here to state the situation adequately. Speaking still of the Fall and its consequences, the Creed says, in its 15th Article, that "by the disobedience of Adam original sin has spread to humankind, being a corruption of the entire nature and a hereditary moral fault with which even infants in their mother's womb are tainted, and which brings forth in man every manner of sin, serving as the root of it, yes, this viciousness is so vile that it is enough for the condemnation of mankind. And it is not annulled even by baptism, even if it, thanks to God's grace, is not imputed unto condemnation to the children of God." (Again we have translated from the original of 1561. The revisionists of 1566 have added the word "wholly" before "annulled" and have inserted the expression "nor wholly eradicated, seeing that at all times eruptions come up from it as from an evil fountain.") The changes make no difference for our present purpose.) This passage, about which there has been considerable writing, much of it not necessary, is altogether plain — as a creedal statement should be. It tells us that the event of regeneration (of which Baptism is the symbol) does not eradicate wholly the unregeneracy native to fallen man; tells us, if we may keep our figure, that it is useless to try

The "Absolute" Antithesis — Continued

to find a specimen of regenerate tissue that does not show, at the upper right, some nonconforming cells. In a word, it tells us that regeneration is never "absolute" in this dispensation. In the tissues of every saint, as in that of every sinner, there is an area of nonconformity. And its presence renders the terminology of the "absolute" antithesis questionable, to put it kindly.

Once more it should be noticed that this deviating tissue in the regenerate is *vestigial*, as was the corresponding area in the unregenerate. It too is a remnant of the past. And in either case not to feel the need of a footnote is to allow oneself an absolutism which may indeed please a "relentless logic" but which the Confession warrants not and the Scripture allows not.

So What?

WHAT of it? One often reads a book without much attention to its footnotes. Is it then really so bad to ignore the footnotes here?

We think it can be extremely bad.

Absolutism can do much harm, has done untold harm to the cause.

On the one hand, this absolutism that deals with "absolute" regeneracy and "absolute unregeneracy" is the prolific mother of Pharisaism, that most harmful of all the blights that can attack men's souls, the one condition that elicited from the Savior a biting invective. What is Pharisaism, if not the notion that the absolutes which are reserved for a future dispensation are commodities of the here and now, so that men emit either the white light of "absolute" sanctity or the black light of "absolute" sinfulness. The Pharisees were early absolutists; they lived, or thought they lived, in a world of saints and sinners — just like that, without any footnotes. There is tissue, so said the Pharisee, on which even the microscope of the Almighty detects no nonconforming cells — just as there is tissue ("this Publican" for example) in which sinfulness is at the saturation point. Absolutism breeds the notion that there are men and organizations that deserve only benediction. It was precisely because Christ let it be plain that even these "holiest of men" had but "a small beginning of this obedience" that the Pharisee who dealt in "absolute" regeneracy revolted. The

memory, frightful enough, of the deviating mass at the upper right is the one thing, the one and only, that can keep a regenerate person safe from Pharisaism. Where the footnote to his regeneracy is ignored, something is just around the corner that will in its inevitable course be a stench in the nostrils of Him with whom we have to do.

On the other hand, a footnote to the doctrine of "absolute" unregeneracy is necessary if our approach to "those outside" is to be correct and fruitful. Absolutism leads so easily to a holier-than-thou attitude that alienates men. It imagines that to "walk in wisdom toward those that are outside" is to ostracize them. The very demeanor of the absolutist makes his approach to the world a failure from the start. Because of absolutism's tendency to minimize history and its significance it goes with seven league boots to the crass antithesis that is reserved for the End; it makes the church and the world pull apart from each other prematurely. For, conscious and outright hostility toward Christ and His gospel is in the Bible always delineated as a *final* phase and it should be remembered that the earlier phase of "I find no fault in him" also has its place in the total development. Absolutism in its ambition to keep itself unspotted by the world forgets that the Lord likes, every evening, to see lint on our sleeves, lint which comes from contact with men in the marketplace. It tells its disciples that they must "come apart in a desert (i.e., an uninhabited) place" but it fails to indicate that such is intended "for a little while" and that in order that they may "rest themselves."

The absolutist, perhaps because of his tendency toward "relentless logic," must go and does go to strange lengths. Some of these would be quite ludicrous if they were not solemnly intended. It has actually been seriously proposed, seeing that there is not an inch of ground which the regenerate and the unregenerate can share, that it is high time we organize "een vereeniging voor Geitenfokkerij op Gereformeerde Grondslag" (a Society for Goat-breeding on a Reformed basis)!

Absolutism does not have a good record. Because it is not realistic it is not in position to give good leadership in this bourne of time and place. Permit us to choose a single example. When

toleration was struggling to come to birth in the age of the Reformation it was absolutism that stood squarely in its way. It had to. For according to the thought habits of absolutism the civil magistrate must be either a Christian or an anti-Christian entity; he results either from the regenerative stroke of God's grace in Christ or he comes up out of the pit. Needless to say, he chose the former alternative. And when the Anabaptists denied such a rating to the magistracy as such, this their denial was construed to be a repudiation of the magistracy as such. (This unwarranted interpretation of the Anabaptist's view of the civil powers is still bandied about. By and large the Anabaptists were very far from "rejecting the higher powers.")

What the Anabaptists were struggling to say is that the magistracy must not be construed as an item in the redemptive Kingdom of Jesus Christ nor as an item in the Kingdom of Antichrist. This is a construction that has since then become a part of the American way of life and is accepted by Reformed people generally. But the absolutist of that age was unable to adjust himself to the new thought anent the doctrine of the civil power as that doctrine was taking shape in the mind of Anabaptism.

The reader will not resent a bit of documentation at this point. We shall quote from the lengthy Report of the Conference held with the Anabaptist leaders late in the 16th Century, at Franckenthal. Asked "whether a Christian may be a civil ruler and punish with the sword?" Hainz Rannich spokesman for the Anabaptists replied: "It does not appear that there was included a civil ruler among the office of the apostolic church; for it is written in Ephesians 4 that 'he gave some to be apostles, and some, prophets . . . and some pastors and teachers' and He had also instituted a civil magistrate in it then the Apostle would not have failed to make mention of it. . . . This is our position: Since we know that the Church of God is spiritually minded and the world carnally minded therefore God has put a judge between the two. . . . We understand it so that the magistracy is not to be partial to either side. . . . If he were wholly 'in the world' then he would too readily use the sword on the pious and if he were 'in the church' he would be inclined to do as much for the unbelieving and the irreligious. . . . I intend it thus and not otherwise, that the magistracy stan-

between the wicked and the pious as a preserver of the peace . . . precisely as there is a hedge between a fine vineyard and the wild beasts."

Not every turn in Rannich's argument is equally felicitous; but every Reformed person, surely every Reformed person in *America*, will find in the representations of the Anabaptist general lines that have become axiomatic in his thinking. I dare say he will feel much more sympathetic toward the ideas of Rannich than toward the opinions with which the spokesman for the Reformed group sought to devastate his opponent.

That spokesman was Peter Dathenus, an absolutist if ever there was one. He made very short work of the Anabaptist idea of a magistracy not as such a part of Christ's Kingdom nor yet a part of the realm of Antichrist. He countered with: "This is an unheard-of gloss and the fabrication of a third way of which the Scriptures nowhere make any mention." Then he quoted, with his usual air of finality, the last verse of John 3, and, added triumphantly "Here we see that all men are either believers or unbelievers — there is no position between them." To make his meaning absolutely clear he added that according to Deut. 17 Israel had to "set a king over them from among their brethren" and he commented, "here God says not that he shall be as a hedge between the wicked

and the pious but that he must be a 'brother,' that is, one of the people of God. . . . and it thus appears that your gloss of an 'in-between' is altogether contrary to the Word of God."

Verily it must be said that in so far as the cause of freedom of conviction and toleration was served by the Reformed fathers it was so served in spite of the absolutists that have frequently run with them.

No, absolutism does not have a good record. Let us take time to look at still another of the bitter fruits that grow on this stalk. It is this: Where absolutism prevails men tend to take to sniping at their "brethren." That this actually is a concomitant of absolutism will be evident if one will but take the time to see. There are areas in the world where absolutism is in the saddle — and it is in these selfsame areas that such sniping is painfully much in evidence. That this should follow from absolutism may seem strange at first sight but it is not strange at all. For, first of all, absolutism invariably sustains very much attenuated contact with the world of living, struggling, yes, sinning men; its contact with "the world" has slendered down to periodic invasions of that world for the purpose of recruiting new members for itself; it tends to cause its adherents to talk about the world, perhaps to it, but no

longer with it. This policy of separation causes muscles intended by God for combat in the world to atrophy; but atrophying muscles begin to itch. The absolutist does not come home each night dead tired from the day's work with and in the world of men; as a consequence he is like the adolescent who hasn't had enough to do and is therefore hard to live with. If one has stood all day in the milling crowd of unregenerated men he will be just too tired to pick a quarrel with those of his own household; moreover he will be so appreciative of a fellow-soldier, one who can share with him the secret joys and fears that come to all God's children, that he will intuitively make a go of it when he is among brethren.

Anyway, the implications of absolutism as well as those of the Reformed system are momentous no matter how you look at it. In an absolutist system a believing wife will have to pull away from an unbelieving husband; but in a Reformed construction no such thing is incumbent upon her. The reason? This is still the age of the evangel ("How knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?") and not yet the era of the absolute antithesis!

And what is true of the marital contact is true of any and every other legitimate contact in a legitimate enterprise.

Teachers Wanted!

By HENRY ZYLSTRA

LAST year the National Union of Christian Schools published an important little pamphlet. The eleven-member committee which prepared the pamphlet upon assignment from the 1951 Christian School Convention did excellent work.

In the thirteen pages of this pamphlet we get the facts and figures on teacher training inadequacy and on teacher shortage among us. We get some account also of the alleged and of the real causes of this situation. Moreover, we get a six-point series of proposals aiming at improvement.

We knew, of course, particularly if we were members of local school boards, that there was such a thing as a teacher shortage. All of us saw the expanding lists of advertisements un-

der the "Teachers Wanted" caption in *The Banner*. We noticed that these lists began appearing earlier each year, and that many of them ran on and on, sometimes well beyond September. Some school societies ran their advertisements indefinitely. Like apartment house owners a few years back they fixed a permanent "Vacancy" sign at their front door. A few school boards began featuring their attractions. They stopped just short of describing the scenery outside the Kindergarten windows.

It was, you might say, a teacher's market. Report had it that this year there was a sort of understanding between boards, teachers, and Calvin College that no contracts were to be awarded before March 1. The idea was to

give all an equal chance, and to make something like competitive bidding possible. There was a great rush when the gates were opened. Some spoke of jostling at the counter, and it was even said that the elbow was put to use.

The demand continues greater than the supply. When the gates are closed, and the stalls are empty, and the college has run out of ways of saying "Sorry" courteously, there are still lots of vacancies that need filling. When the adequately prepared candidates and the able candidates are taken, the hiring does not stop. School must somehow be kept, and the classes must somehow be taught.

Then the other point of this two-pronged problem makes itself felt. Teacher shortage leads to teacher in-

Teachers Wanted — Continued

adequacy. Two-year graduates are hired instead of four-year graduates. The regular or standard state law requirements are abandoned in favor of "temporary," "emergency," or minimum requirements. Sometimes it becomes necessary to interpret even these minimum standards loosely. After a while the abnormal is accepted as the normal. Then talk begins about Junior Colleges as the solution to the teacher shortage.

The problem, therefore, becomes a whole lot like the doctor's problem who has a patient suffering from both anemia and high blood pressure. What he must prescribe for the one disease aggravates the other. The prescription for teacher shortage is to go into the byways and to draft all and sundry, regardless of ability, and regardless of education. That helps to fill vacancies. But it breaks down the morale, the dignity, yes, and the distinctiveness, of the Christian teaching profession.

THESE are the facts, as the pamphlet outlines them, about the teacher *inadequacy*:

38% of our teachers (the figure includes our high school teachers) have less than four years of college education.

45% of our elementary teachers do not meet the regular or standard requirements of the states in which they are teaching.

25% of our elementary teachers do not meet the "emergency" or "minimum" requirements of the states in which they are teaching.

So much for *inadequacy*, measured even so by such mere externalities as state laws. Our own standards ought to be incomparably higher. As for the *shortage*, the pamphlet reports that we shall in the next five years need from sixty to a hundred more teachers than our present known resources can supply.

Nobody is entitled to infer, of course, that this situation among us is worse than it is in American schools generally. Nobody is entitled to say that the Christian faith in our Reformed group has a weak witness in these 925 full time teachers, who, according to the pamphlet, served us in 1951-1952. There is a vigorously manifest Christian idealism behind them, and, more

particularly, in them, which sometimes makes the world stop and take note. Forty-five percent, the pamphlet reports, of the graduates of Calvin College become Christian school teachers. That is an impressive figure.

Meanwhile, though, the fact is that we need *more* teachers and *better* teachers. To get more teachers by getting poorer teachers is to make progress backwards in schools which depend for their distinctiveness on excellent teachers. Our necessary concern for the *more*, consequently, must not deflect us from our necessary concern for the *better*.

In groping towards solution to this problem, we do well to remind ourselves again of the uniqueness of the teacher's position in our American schools generally, and in our own schools also. It is a position, which, if shared by anybody, is shared by the nurse. Both positions must, in our society, to a very considerable extent be filled by young women between the period of their graduation from school and their marriage. In fact, these two professions are recommended to young women on the ground that, while enabling them to earn some money and to be of use, they also contribute substantially to the needs, eventually, of the home.

Fortunately a good many of our young women respond to this challenge. But because the education and training required for both is long, because the discipline of the work is severely exacting, because the remuneration is disproportionately low, and because the period of service is often short, some of our young women prefer industry to these "service" professions. And of these two professions, that of the teacher and that of the nurse, the teacher's situation is at present the poorer. Her period of education tends to be necessarily longer. Moreover, she has less bargaining power than the nurse for the improvement of her situation. Her product is more ideal, is less material, than the nurse's product. The needs of the body are not more real than those of the mind, but they are more immediately urgent, and are taken care of first. Hence the organized recruitment of nurses, and the financing of nurses' education is well under way. But the teachers still must fend for themselves.

Our own schools cannot do without these "interim" teachers. We must be

very grateful to them for carrying so large a part of the teaching responsibility for us. Were they to quit, we should be in a crisis indeed. We must do everything we can to help them resist the appeal of industry, and to respond to the appeal of the cause. Their transiency, of course, constitutes them a problem. Even among us, the pamphlet very conservatively estimates there is an annual turn-over of teachers amounting to 18%. The main cause is marriage.

We must also, therefore, maintain as much of the "professional" for them as we can. I see no hope in shortening the period of their education so as to extend the period of their service. This were to sacrifice that disciplined spiritual maturity which our schools require in order to be Christian schools. Presumably, too, nobody cares to argue for late marriage. Late marriage is unnatural, and there is no point in stealing from the home to help the school.

What we can do for this interim teacher, perhaps, is to give her good in-service support. We can flank her on all sides with well educated and experienced professional colleagues. We can, for example, give her a principal that is, a first rate, professionally established person, whose job is not to teach the four upper grades and make out absence slips, but to direct the properly educational effort of the school. And if we must, at a pinch, cut down the period of training at all, we can then cut it down on the methodological side, leaving that to in-service "apprenticeship" under "masters," and so leave the determinatively important "philosophical" education intact.

I suggested that it made no sense to postpone marriage in order to increase the period of availability of a young woman's teaching. But it may be that we can draw on the home at the other end. There are among us a considerable number of well-educated married women who represent excellent teacher potential. Their families are well on the way to independence. Their economic status is good. Their health is vigorous. Their knowledge has matured into a wisdom of life. Their domestic conveniences are legion. One guesses that there should be some possibility here of harvesting at long last something like a spiritual gain from the modern leisure. In some of them the sense of service, the sense of the positive life, so lacking, the sociologist report, in the well-schooled middle-age

American woman's life, could among us blossom into the fine flower of Christian education.

We shall have to continue to count heavily, also, upon those women, many of them single, who constitute the properly professional group in our elementary schools. Were they heads of families, we should have to do without them; they could not afford to serve us. As it is they constitute the professional core of the schools. They work creatively, loyally, unobtrusively. They are God-sent, and we take them for granted. Indispensable as they are to us, we must do all in our power to make them *better* teachers. We must give them the benefit of conventions, institutes, and leaves of absence for professional growth and development. The best of them make supervisory principals superfluous, and are mainstays of support to the *interim* teacher.

FINALLY, there are the men of our elementary schools. They are few,

and of those few many are administrators. Until we make it possible for men to achieve a career in the profession of teaching in our elementary schools, those schools will continue inadequate. It is money, not modern psychology, that has made a schoolmarm out of the schoolmaster. We need schoolmasters badly. And that means we must pay them enough to keep them.

Our school societies, many of them, most of them, are doing their level best to improve salaries. There has been commendable improvement too. But it has not been enough. On this score, the pamphlet states: "The results of the questionnaire sent to our school boards reveal that only half of our boards could state that their teachers were receiving average annual salaries equivalent to the average annual salaries of those who make up the membership of their school society." This, then, continues to be the great barrier to recruiting candidates, particularly among men, to the teaching profession. Go down the list of men who are teach-

ing in our elementary schools and you will find that they (a) never buy a "new" car, (b) have an overcoat or a topcoat, but not both, (c) live in inherited houses, and (d) work for wages on Saturdays and during the summers to balance the budget.

I have only one practicable suggestion to make at the moment to those school societies which are struggling to improve the income of their teachers, and cannot do so. The suggestion is that they work with their consistories and their ministers to spread the cost of elementary school education *over the whole community, not over the parents of children merely*. Those of us who do not contribute because we have no children, or because our children have graduated, do not understand the nature of the community of Christians, nor of the spiritual education of the members of the Kingdom as the purpose of life. It is not my child, or yours, that is being educated, but the Kingdom that is being built.

Lo, I Am With You Alway

By HENRY STOB

THESSE are words of the resurrected, the departing, the heaven-bound Christ. Is it true that the risen, the glorified, the ascended Christ, and in him God, is really and redemptively with men still? Is God with us even though his Son no longer shares our lot?

God was with us once. He came to us when in Bethlehem a babe was born who bore the name Immanuel. In the person of his Son he lived as a man among men for something over thirty years. In Jesus Christ, the Son incarnate, he entered into union with mankind and into concrete fellowship with sinful but favored men like Peter, James, and John, and their companions. With them the divine Christ walked and talked, laughed and wept, ate and drank. He wove his life into their own; he taught and healed and blessed them; he established them in a fellowship with God unlike any formed before or since.

This fellowship was not dissolved by Christ's death, although it was interrupted. Christ died a victorious and redemptive death that issued in the resurrection. After three days in the grave he entered anew into concrete associa-

tion with his own. But there was a difference, and the disciples noticed it. They observed a change in Jesus which affected his relation to them.

In the resurrected Christ there was a strange new quality. The body he possessed had lost its grosser aspects, and to it the common physical laws seemed no longer to apply. His former associations he only occasionally renewed. He ate, but not as if he needed any food. He spoke, but with accents more divine than human. He was less the meek and humble man of Galilee than the exalted Lord of Glory. His identity with men seemed to have grown markedly smaller. And when his friends and disciples contemplated him they became afraid. Fear seized them, a fear born of a deepening sense of isolation.

Jesus had arisen. That was for his followers a most significant fact. Their Lord had returned. The Messiah, the Christ, the Savior, was once more livingly present among them. They could enjoy his fellowship again. This made them glad. But there were misgivings too. Jesus was plainly not the same. Mary didn't even recognize him at first,

and when she would touch him she was majestically forbidden to do so. The disciples of Emmaus walked with him and dined with him and they knew him not at all — until in a twinkling of an eye he vanished from their sight. In Galilee they thought he was a ghost, and in the upper room the doors and locks proved no barrier to his bodily presence.

In this and other ways the consciousness grew on his disciples that they didn't possess him any more, that he was no longer of their world, that somehow they were to lose him yet; that he was, as it were, farther from the grossness and concreteness of their everyday life than before and thus farther from their needs, more deaf to their heart's cry. And they were afraid — afraid that they would lose him altogether.

Their fear seemed not altogether unfounded. Even before his death Jesus had spoken of his departure and had said, "Whither I go, ye cannot come." Now the time of departure seemed at hand. Soon he would leave his disciples to return to the Father. Yet a little while and they would see him no long-

Lo, I Am With You Alway — Continued

er in the flesh. Presently a cloud would come and carry him out of their sight. They would part on the mountain — Christ to ascend to the right hand of God, his followers to descend to the duties and dangers of earth, with no visible leader, with no divine teacher at their side, with no object of worship that they could see or touch, with none to instruct and succour them. Contemplating this, they became afraid.

When this fear was building up in them the Lord appeared. Meeting them he gave them their instructions. They were to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them. And this was to be their support and inspiration: "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth," and, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

ONE may reasonably inquire what Jesus really meant by these last words. He did not mean, of course, that he would remain with his disciples after the manner of the last thirty years, or in the form his presence took after the resurrection. The disciples had read the signs aright. Jesus was definitely about to depart. The instructions he had just given were evidence enough of that. He was leaving his cause in his follower's hands after the manner of that Lord who, about to go into a far country, delivered to his servants his goods with instructions to trade with them and make good gains. And this evidence was supported by the various tokens already noticed, as well as by the earlier predictions of the Lord. Whatever Jesus meant, he did not mean to deny his prospective physical detachment from the earth. He was surely going to leave.

It was precisely this leaving, however, that was to guarantee his continual presence as redeemer, and this the disciples had to learn. They had to learn that Christ's appearance on earth was but an episode, an episode of cosmic and eternal significance indeed, but an episode nevertheless, a part that pointed beyond itself to a whole, a station on the way that led to a further destination. They had to learn that the Son of God did not become man for the sake of being man; he took on our flesh in order that

through his death and resurrection he might redeem us. The incarnation was but a means to the redemption, and redemption led beyond Christ's residence upon the earth. It led him to the skies and to the throne of God. That is why he was going. There was a divine and programmatic compulsion leading him on and away.

It was precisely this compulsion and this going that would make true and give content to the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway." It isn't Jesus' physical presence that is the world's great benediction. It is only as Savior that sinners have need of him. It is only as such that he is a lost world's hope, and it is only as such that he can begin to have a vital meaning and interest for us who without him are at war with God and destined for perdition. If we are to have a part in Christ at all, it must be in the redeeming Christ. It is only as the calling, rescuing, forgiving, sanctifying, and glorifying Redeemer that we have a positive interest in him and his continued presence at all. If he isn't that for us he might better not be with us.

If that be clear, if it be clear that our first and most vital concern in Christ is in him as the Savior, then it will also be clear why his Presence in this most pregnant sense of the word is inextricably bound up with his ascension. For Christ would not be a Savior at all if he had not gone on. The redemptive process is a whole and includes the ascension as part. Without the latter it would be incomplete. Only after the full march from Bethlehem to the right hand of the Father is the victory won and the task, save for the final consummation, completely done. The paradox is deep, but it is divine: only by leaving could Jesus be with us alway.

That is why he said, even before his death, it is expedient for you that go. It was expedient because only by his going could the Comforter come! How often has he been misunderstood! As if he was a kind of lesser substitute for Christ, a kind of balm of salve to heal the wounds caused by Jesus' physical departure, a sop to satisfy his mourners, a consolation gift to men deprived of the highest prize. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Comforter is the Spirit, the principle and origin of life, the author of strength and peace, with the Father and the Son the eternal God. He is the necessary and indispensable agent of salvation, without whom the world would be eternally cold and comfortless and we always without hope. He is the Comforter without whom Christ would be at most a dreadful judgment and at best a empty name. He is not Christ's substitute; he is his correlary. His coming is not a reluctant concession; it is a divine arrangement. Christ goes *order* to send him.

And now that Spirit has come. And in him Christ is present with us. It is *his* Spirit, with whom he is so intimately associated and so definitely identified that he could say in literal truth: Lo, I am with you alway. It is as if he would say to his troubled and sorrowing disciples: True, you will see me no more. Our walks, our conversations will come to an end. I go presently to my Father. But I will not leave you alone. I go, but I take along only that which I borrowed from the earth. What I brought you and wrought for you remains. My Spirit give you; my Spirit will abide with you. You will have not the memory of me merely, nor only my teachings, but myself. I will lead you and guide you, comfort and console you, instruct and succour you, and bring you at last into the presence of my Father.

The Editors regret that due to limitations of space,
"Letters to the Journal" had to be omitted from this issue.

Make a Suggestion . . .

to NEW SUBSCRIBERS

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER

All issues — June to December, inclusive, for 1953

only \$1.00 for the 7 issues

Mail promptly to THE REFORMED JOURNAL, 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E.
Grand Rapids 3, Michigan